

BRING ME MEN: INTERTEXTUAL IDENTITY FORMATION AT THE  
US AIR FORCE ACADEMY

A Thesis Presented

by

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## DEDICATION

To Katie. We did it! USAFA here we come!

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE COMING AMERICAN

*Bring me men to match my mountains;  
Bring me men to match my plains,  
Men with empires in their purpose,  
And new eras in their brains.  
Bring me men to match my prairies,  
Men to match my inland seas,  
Men whose thought shall pave a highway  
Up to ampler destinies;  
Pioneers to clear Thought's marshlands,  
And to cleanse old Error's fen,  
Bring me men to match my mountains,  
Bring me men!<sup>1</sup>*

#### The Coming American

On June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2003, I sat on a bus winding through the roads of the 18,000 acre campus at the US Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. I wore a badge with my personal information condensed into a barcode around my neck, carried combat boots tied together across my shoulders, and a clear plastic bag full of more barcodes, stationery, pre-stamped thank you notes, a mechanical pencil, and two pens. As instructed by the upper class cadet cadre, I stared straight ahead at my “warrior card,” the note card I held at eyelevel in front of me trying to memorize. The bus stopped before I could memorize all the information about General Butler, Class of 1961. The door opened and just as suddenly as we got on the bus and drove away from our families and former lives, we filed out onto black footprints painted onto the concrete parking lot below one of the dorms.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Walter Foss, “The Coming American.” *Contrails*. (USAFA: USAF Academy, CO, 2003) 55, first stanza.

A bus full of mostly 18 year olds, reduced to the barcodes hanging around our necks, holding boots and bags quickly assembled on evenly spaced footprints to practice the art of standing erect, motionless, and rigid—standing at attention. We were instructed on how to make stationary right angle turns, and we practiced standing at attention some more while listening to the nameless, faceless cadre member telling us of the sacrifice and effort it would take to make it at *his* Air Force Academy. Then as a group, the thirty or so other people standing with me on the footprints made a ninety degree left turn where we were formed into a single-file line and ran up a ramp to begin our Academy cadet careers. 1435 days later, 74% of my class would walk through the ramp again to join the forty-eight classes before us who had given up the privileges of sitting down, wearing backpacks over both shoulders, walking where we pleased, speaking outdoors, weekends, normal clothes, countless hours of sleep, relationships, summer vacations, television, cell phones, privacy, social lives, and our college years to join the Long Blue Line—the 38,000 or so graduates who have donned the gold sash,<sup>2</sup> marched our squadrons through the ramp to Stillman Parade Field where, as the First Class, we symbolically march out of our squadrons, and the Academy, and into the active duty Air Force.<sup>3</sup>

The ramp through which my class entered in 2003 was empty, marked only by discolored marble that the ten recently removed characters left as their mark on the history, memory, and tradition of the Air Force Academy. In 1964, the ramp through

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<sup>2</sup> First Class Cadets (seniors) are distinguished from the ranks in the Parade Dress uniform by wearing a gold sash instead of the white belt with silver buckle the other three classes wear.

<sup>3</sup> The formation known as the “flying wedge” in which the First Class Cadets march out of the Wing is performed only twice in a cadet’s career; once after successful completion of Basic Cadet Training when the new Fourth Classmen (freshman) march into the Wing, and the day before graduation when the First Class marches out of the Wing.

which every cadet has entered and marched out of since 1958 when the Academy moved to its current location was adorned with what would become the famous, contentious, and lamented words from Samuel Walter Foss's poem, "The Coming American."

"Bring Me Men..."

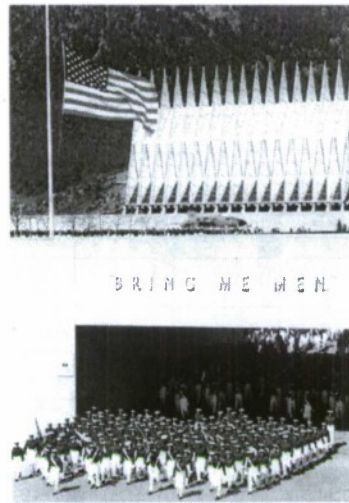


Figure 1: Graduation Parade March Through the Ramp<sup>4</sup>

### Bring Me Men

On 1 April 1954, seven years after the National Security Act of 1947 made the US Air Force a separate branch of the military under the Department of Defense, Congress authorized the construction the US Air Force Academy, and on July 11 1955, the first class of 306 men was sworn in, and four years later, 207 graduated (*Contrails* 24). On May 28<sup>th</sup> 2008 the 50<sup>th</sup> class at the US Air Force Academy graduated, and for the 28<sup>th</sup> time, added roughly a thousand more men *and* women to the Long Blue Line. It took twenty-one years from when the first class entered in 1955 before the Air Force Academy

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<sup>4</sup> "'Bring Me Men,' A Proud Air Force Academy Heritage." *Talking Proud*. Online Image. 28 March 2003. <<http://www.talkingproud.us/ImagesEditorChoice/BringMeMen.jpg>>.

saw its first women, one walking famously on her first day in front of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp (BMMR) ready to change the all-male Academy.



Figure 2: One of USAFA's First Women on Inprocessing Day, 1976<sup>5</sup>

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1894, eighty-six years before the first woman graduated from USAFA, Samuel Walter Foss composed “The Coming American,” featuring the poem’s central repeated line “Bring Me Men...” These words were originally installed on the Terrazzo<sup>6</sup> level ramp at the Air Force Academy in 1964 (USAFA Historian). Then Commandant of Cadets General Robert W. Strong Jr. adorned the ramp with these words as a public way to inspire the cadet Wing and serve as an ideological fixture much in the same way as the Honor Code that adorns a wall in the Cadet Area.<sup>7</sup> “Bring Me Men...”

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<sup>5</sup> USAFA Today Folklore. <[http://www.usafatoday.org/wiki/index.php/Image:AFA\\_80s\\_Lady.jpg](http://www.usafatoday.org/wiki/index.php/Image:AFA_80s_Lady.jpg)>.

<sup>6</sup> The Terrazzo is the square common area between the dorms, academic building, library, dining facility, and the Cadet Chapel. It is the fourth floor level for the two dorms, the third floor for the academic building, and the ground floor for the dining facility and library. This is where the cadet squadrons hold their Wing wide formations, particularly where the Wing forms up before parades such as the Graduation Day Parade. The ramp leads from the bottom floor of the dorm up to the Terrazzo level.

<sup>7</sup> The Cadet Honor Code, “I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor tolerate among us anyone who does” is displayed on a wall that faces the center of the Terrazzo. The Honor Code, which has remained unchanged since its introduction, is one of the few traditions at the Academy to survive in its original form.





Figure 3: Unveiling the New Core Values Ramp<sup>9</sup>

### The Class of Change

Twenty seven years after the first woman threw her hat towards the sky, on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007, I joined her; and while during my four years at the Academy I faced different challenges than hers, my years were also fraught with tension and a resurfaced bitterness towards the women who were still seemingly unwelcome outsiders in an all male institution. From my first day of Basic Cadet Training (BCT), my class was hailed “the Class of Change,” with none more visible a change than the empty ramp through which we entered. Throughout my Fourth Class year, my classmates and I struggled to find a place within the traditions of the Academy that we were suddenly denied access to because of the changes in training and procedure that accompanied the removal of “Bring Me Men...” in the *Agenda for Change*. The upper three classes resented the changes, viewing them as unnecessary outside interference in our institution, and they blamed our class for these changes over which we had no control. The empty ramp became representative of my class; along with blaming my class as a whole for its removal, the upper three classes treated us individually with apathy. The Academy they knew had disappeared, removed with the letters on the ramp, and my class had no access to it. This

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<sup>9</sup> Ken Wright. *Writing on the Wall*, 29 September 2004, <<http://www.af.mil/shared/media/photodb/photos/040930-F-0000W-003.jpg>>.

attitude towards my class meant that instead of actively shaping the new Academy, the classes of 2004, 2005 and 2006 lamented the traditions and heritage we, as outsiders, would know only in memory. Thus, in 2003, the 220 women in the Class of 2007 were double outsiders of the predominantly male Academy; instead of walking through the “Bring Me Men...” ramp as our predecessors did in 1976, we walked for the first time through the memory of it.

I spent my time at the Air Force Academy like many of my classmates, both men and women, trying to prove that I deserved to be there, that I understood the traditions and the old way of training, that I longed to have the old way back, that I would hold on to it and pass its tradition on. When my class, the Class of Change, graduated, we had new words on the ramp and had begun the process of creating slightly new traditions rooted in the ones we refused to give up. As I look back at the power words have, especially at the Academy where they are so instrumental to the process of producing “officers of character,” “Bring Me Men...” and all its complexities and different representations remains an important phrase to graduates and cadets, though it has been replaced by a new phrase charged with producing tomorrow’s officers of character.

In what follows, I will lay out a discourse analysis methodology that I will then use to look at the dominant subject position “Bring Me Men...” constructs, and the individual identities that it offers cadets and graduates. This look at a phrase that is uniquely the Air Force Academy’s own will shed light onto the type of officer the Air Force Academy seeks to produce. The Academy, as the primary commissioning source for the most well funded, well equipped, most technological Air Force in the world, shoulders the responsibility for producing officers capable of making the critical ethical

and strategic decisions contemporary armed combat demands. In understanding how “Bring Me Men...” shapes the identity for cadets, we are able to understand the divided allegiances produced by its constructed gendered subject position and the ways in which words really do matter.



## CHAPTER 2

### A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

As I have spent more than five years now trying to understand how and why the loss of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp affected both my time at the Academy and now my time as a proud alumna, my suspicion is that the single largest factor in the controversy over the ramp and the injury the words’ removal caused to the Academy and its community of members resides in the drastic difference in the ways different parts of its audience interpreted the text. What this suspicion has led to is the development of a discourse analysis methodology that acknowledges that a text (especially one whose letters are five feet tall and mounted on a ramp), the subject position it constructs, and the individual identity it enables are inherently affected by all the surrounding texts and circumstances that create, accompany, and preserve it.

The most obvious concept that arises out of such an acknowledgement is the theory of intertextuality. In his book *Discourse and Social Change*, Norman Fairclough develops Bakhtin and Kristeva’s idea of intertextuality alongside six other dimensions of discourse analysis. “Intertextuality,” Fairclough explains, “is basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth.” In addition he writes: “In terms of production, an intertextual perspective stresses the historicity of texts: how they always constitute additions to existing ‘chains of speech communication’ (Bakhtin 1986: 94) consisting of prior texts to which they respond”

(Fairclough 84). In the final sentence of his definition of intertextuality, Fairclough, quoting Bakhtin, suggests the importance of a text's surrounding circumstances.

Similarly, in her essay "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situations to Rhetorical Ecologies," Jennifer Edbauer develops what she calls "rhetorical ecologies," where she argues that we must treat a text as a process instead of a static event. In this chapter, I will expand on both Fairclough's notion of discourse analysis and intertextuality while using Edbauer's concept of a rhetorical ecology as the overarching concept of my analysis; this theoretical lens will show how while "Bring Me Men..." constructed multiple subject positions for cadets and graduates, institutional pressures, longstanding military tradition, and the Academy environment and power structures combined to allow only a single dominant subject position. Over time, this subject position remained stagnant, while the individual identities within it shifted as its surrounding circumstances and 'chains of speech communication' also altered. Finally, in addition to drawing on Fairclough and Edbauer, I will use Anne Freadman's essay "Anyone For Tennis" to enhance the discussions that Fairclough and Edbauer set up, specifically using her discussion of place and function and genre as a way to understand how these factors changed the meaning of the BMMR.

### Rhetorical Ecologies

Jennifer Edbauer's essay "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situations to Rhetorical Ecologies" expands on the importance of situation and refines Fairclough's three text processes of production, distribution, and consumption in a way that gives more attention to surrounding circumstances and multiple exigences that

affect and create meaning. Edbauer, explaining different interpretations of Bitzer's rhetorical situation and how that model is ultimately insufficient, finally concludes that "the elements of rhetorical situations bleed" (Edbauer 9). This bleeding of rhetorical situations is similar to Fairclough's intertextuality, but instead of necessarily limiting the "chains of speech communication" strictly to text, Edbauer extends the notion of intertextuality to context as well, what she calls a rhetorical ecology. "An ecological, or *affective*, rhetorical model," explains Edbauer, "is one that reads rhetoric both as a process of distributed emergence and as an ongoing circulation process" (13). Conceptualizing rhetoric as a process allows for a better understanding of how meaning changes as context changes. Edbauer writes: "A given rhetoric is not *contained* by the elements that comprise its rhetorical situation (exigence, rhetor, audience, constraints). Rather, a rhetoric emerges already infected by the viral intensities that are circulating in the social field" (14). This concept of rhetorical ecologies spreading with the viral intensities of a particular social field will be the cornerstone of my overall analysis, raising questions such as: What are the viral intensities that are circulating in the BMMR's social field? How does the BMMR's ongoing circulation process change its meaning, before and after its removal? How do detached ecologies within the text's larger one affect its meaning?

#### Production, Distribution, Consumption

To begin understanding the BMMR's rhetorical ecology, I will analyze how the words came to signify different things in different contexts. Fairclough acknowledges the importance of context: "analysis of a particular discourse as a piece of discursive practice

focuses upon processes of text production, distribution and consumption. All of these processes are social and require reference to particular economic, political, and institutional settings within which discourse is generated" (Fairclough 71). Identifying the text producer, system of distribution and consumption provides a way to compare how the "Bring Me Men..." ramp's meaning changed at each different encounter as these three contextual elements of it changed within the text's rhetorical ecology.

Fairclough later explains that closely tied to the production of a text is its "context of situation," which will help reveal how the BMMR's production changed over time. A "context of situation" is where "interpreters arrive at intersections of the totality of the social practice of which the discourse is a part, and these interpretations lead to predictions about the meaning of texts which again reduce ambivalence by excluding certain other possible meanings" (81). The BMMR's "context of situation" is important because it excludes and includes other meanings depending on the text's reading before and after 2003. In my forthcoming analysis of the text's audience, I will show which of these meanings were included before 2003 that were excluded after the scandal, and also more interestingly, which were excluded initially, but included following the scandal in 2003.

On the other hand, looking at the text's distribution seems to offer a more individual understanding of the text. Fairclough acknowledges that text producers in "sophisticated organizations" create texts that anticipate their "distribution, transformation, and consumption and have multiple audiences built into them. They may anticipate not only 'addressees' (those directly addressed), but also 'hearers' (those not addressed directly but assumed to be part of audience), and 'overhearers' (those who do

not constitute part of the 'official' audience but are known to be *de facto* consumers)" (79-80). Adding to my discussion of audience, I will analyze the distribution the Air Force Academy anticipated for the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, how this changed (presumably in an unanticipated way) after 2003, who constituted the "addressees", "hearers", and "overhearers" and how these positions changed after 2003.

The final of Fairclough's three text processes of discourse analysis is consumption. Fairclough recognizes that consumption "may be individual or collective" and that "Texts are also consumed differently in different social contexts. This is partly a matter of the sort of interpretative work which is applied to them... and partly of the modes of interpretation which are available" (79). In my discussion of the BMMR's text processes, I will identify how the text was consumed individually, how it was consumed by different groups and how these different consumptions changed with the changes in the text's distribution system following the 2003 scandal. This will lead to a discussion of what type of interpretive work was applied to the text pre- and post-2003, which modes of interpretation were available, and which modes of interpretation were unavailable. The process of consumption joined by production and distribution provides a look at the ways that the text's meaning changed because of the changing context surrounding the 2003 scandal, and provides insight into the type of subject position the text constructed, and how this position was understood and critiqued both before and after the scandal brought it down.



## Distribution, Concatenation, Encounter

Along with placing more emphasis on the ecology of ongoing circulation surrounding texts, Edbauer's model of analysis slightly modifies Fairclough's three text processes. She lists her three processes as: "Distribution, concatenation, encounter" (19). Similar to Fairclough's processes of production, distribution and consumption, Edbauer's model pays less attention to the origin; where Fairclough's production clearly marks the text's producer, Edbauer's distribution doesn't necessarily reveal the origin of the utterance. It does, however, pay more attention to the contextual elements that affect meaning, the chain of linked communication in the text's concatenation and the circumstances around which the text is encountered. The text's concatenation is the process which can best define the parameters of its ecology, and smaller ecologies within the large one. Further, the difference between Fairclough's consumption and Edbauer's encounter is mainly that consumption implies an active role in the text, while encounter may occur passively. This distinction is important in viewing the BMMR because of the way its consumption/encounter construct the subject position. How does a passive encounter as compared to an active act of consumption modify the audience available to the BMMR? How did this change after the scandal in 2003? Using Edbauer's three processes to modify Fairclough's enhances the contextual understanding of a text's meaning, for as Edbauer writes, "public rhetorics do not only exist in the elements of their situation, but also in the radius of their neighboring events" (20). Identifying a text's neighboring events, audience, and exigence provides a complete picture of how that text functioned within that "radius of neighboring events" to create meaning and textually

construct a subject position. This complete picture is the text's rhetorical ecology and I will use the following techniques to analyze specific encounters within it.

#### Constructive Effects of Discourse

As the constructive effect of discourse is the main focus of my analysis of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, Fairclough's expansion of it is useful in synthesizing a discourse analysis methodology. In his chapter titled "A Social Theory of Discourse" Fairclough explains the constructive effects of discourse in which he draws on Foucault's notion of the discursive formation of subjects: "Discourse contributes to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape or constrain it: its own norms and conventions, as well as the relations, identities and institutions which lie behind them" (Fairclough 64). Fairclough then divides the constructive effects of discourse into three different aspects: construction of "what are verily referred to as 'social identities' and 'subject positions' for social 'subjects' and types of 'self;'" secondly, "social relationships between people;" and finally, "systems of knowledge and belief" (64). In a related way, Edith Disler, in her article "Flyboys: The Air Force is Insecure in its Femininity," recognizes that the Air Force's specifically gendered use of language forms the social identities, social relationships and systems of knowledge within it. In considering social identities, relationships and systems of knowledge, it is also useful to consider Alys Eve Weinbaum's analysis of Kate Chopin's "Desiree's Baby" in which she critiques the role of women in masculine culture. Both Disler and Weinbaum will contribute to my analysis of how language, specifically "Bring Me Men..." encodes gender and gender hierarchies.

For my purposes, using Fairclough's three constitutive aspects of discourse as a starting place to understand what subject position, social relations and systems of belief "Bring Me Men..." constructed in its early encounters within the text's rhetorical ecology—its origin as a poem and initial installation on the ramp—raises some very important fundamental questions: Who is the "me"? Who does "men" include and exclude? What are the implied values that require someone to bring men in the first place? These among other questions that I answer in the next chapter are a starting point in determining the subject position the BMMR forms.

#### Interdiscursivity

Part of understanding how the text's rhetorical ecology evolved is understanding its changes in genre, as these changes modified the overall ecology of the text more than individual encounters did. Fairclough defines two types of intertextuality, "manifest intertextuality" which I will discuss later in terms of individual encounters, and more useful in enhancing the understanding of a rhetorical ecology, "interdiscursivity." In his discussion of interdiscursivity, in which he stresses the importance of orders of discourse, Fairclough takes up a discussion of genre asserting that "genres correspond closely to types of social practice" (125). Fairclough defines genre as: "a relatively stable set of conventions that is associated with, and partly enacts, a socially ratified type of activity" (126). A genre, then, implies the text type and even the textual processes of production, distribution and consumption. Fairclough later suggests that a genre is associated with what he calls a particular "activity type." "An activity type can be specified in terms of the structured sequence of actions of which it is composed, and in terms of the



participants involved in the activity—that is, the set of subject positions which are socially constructed and recognized in connection with the activity type” (126). In the next chapter I will identify the activity of the “Bring Me Men...” ramp, who the designated subjects are within it, and also how the BMMR constitutes a particular genre. Fairclough acknowledges that “the extent to which other texts figure in a text depends upon the genre, as do the forms of manifest intertextuality which are used, and the ways in which other text function within a text” (129). As I will show, the BMMR’s genre allows for its forms of manifest intertextuality, and enables other texts and the same text in different ways, to function within it.

#### Ceremonies Affect Production

I will use Fairclough’s definition of genre to look at how shifts in genre affect large shifts in the text’s rhetorical ecology. Expanding on Fairclough, Anne Freadman develops specific rules of genre and discusses particular discourse elements within it. First, Freadman develops the metaphor of playing tennis for how texts make meaning. “Each shot in this analogy,” she explains, “produces value in two ways: in what it enables, or prevents; and to either player” (Freadman 44). Knowing what and who the “shots” and “players” are is fundamental in understanding how a text produces meaning and constructs a subject. For this analogy Freadman defines the difference between a ceremony and a game: “ceremonies are rules for playing, games are rules for play” (47). This distinction becomes important when she asserts that “it will be useful to think of most of our talking and writing as ceremonial” (47). While the shots and players make it easier to understand features about audience and interaction with a text, understanding

writing as “rules for playing” allows us to consider useful aspects of genre that contribute to my discourse analysis methodology.

#### Four Characteristics of Genre

In developing her four characteristics of genre, Freedman discusses that a genre is a game “consisting, minimally, of two texts” and then describes a situation in which inserting a text into an inappropriate ceremony fails to make sense (48). “What has gone wrong” in this situation, Freedman explains, “is that the pairing of the text produced by the simulation with its appropriate uptake has been broken” (48). While this example is specific to the classroom assignment scenario she uses, it raises the question of “appropriate uptake.” Later, I will discuss the BMMR’s appropriate uptake and how was it broken because of the sexual assault scandal. This notion of an intact, appropriate uptake implies her four characteristics of genre:

1. Texts, like speech acts, are tactical;
2. The rules of a genre, and the formal properties of a single text, will not correlate; but rather
3. The two texts of a generic pair will have different properties, like question and answer, theory and refutation;
4. One of the things a text will do is to play its partner, whether or not that partner is present. In order to do so, it must *represent* its partner—previous, current, future, fictional or ideal. (48)

Dissecting how the “Bring Me Men...” ramp fits into these implications of genre, specifically the last two, how it plays and represents its partners (e.g. the poem, the motto, ironic reappropriations, etc.), is a useful addition to the intertextual perspective I have laid out so far.

## Meaning is Place and Function

The notion of place becomes a central concern for Freadman. She asserts that “some kinds of texts occur necessarily, or always, in kind of places, between participants defined by their social roles” (57). Freadman discusses how violence on television is constituted not necessarily by the violent acts that occur, but where they occur, either on the news or in a cartoon, and how these places of occurrence have more bearing on the meaning of violence than the content. To this end, Freadman concludes that “Meaning is not content; it is place and function” (59). Clearly the “Bring Me Men...” ramp has a very specific place (formerly five feet letters glued to a ramp, now in the memory and folklore of the Academy) that deeply affects the meaning. But understanding function also heavily influences the meaning that the text can have and the subject position it therefore constructs. Freadman expands on “meaning is place and function:” “To understand the rules of the genre is to know when and where it is appropriate to do and say certain things” (59). To understand the genres the BMMR took on, which affects, and as Fairclough and Edbauer would suggest, is affected by its audience, is to understand its place, function, textual processes, and intertextual character and how all of these change in different contextual situations that constitute the text’s ecology.

## Intertextuality

As I mentioned above, Fairclough’s definition of intertextuality draws on the process of production. But Fairclough also applies the other two processes to his look at intertextuality:

In terms of distribution, an intertextual perspective is helpful in exploring relatively stable networks which texts move along, undergoing predictable transformations as they shift from one text type to another.... And in terms of consumption, an intertextual perspective is helpful in stressing that it is not just 'the text', not indeed just the texts that intertextually constitute it, that shape interpretation, but also those other texts which interpreters variably bring to the interpretation process. (84-85)

Applying an "intertextual perspective" to the three text processes helps illuminate the importance of a text's intertextual properties. In his chapter "Intertextuality," Fairclough develops important aspects of a text's intertextual character. He makes the distinction between manifest intertextuality, in which "other texts are explicitly present in the text under analysis," and "constitutive intertextuality," what he also calls "interdiscursivity," which is "the configuration of discourse conventions that go into its production" (104). Identifying both the manifest intertextuality and interdiscursivity of a text provide a framework for discourse analysis of a text.

Fairclough's first characteristic of manifest intertextuality that is useful in analyzing the BMMR is "discourse representation:" "a form of intertextuality in which parts of other texts are incorporated into a text and usually explicitly marked" (107). As an example of manifest intertextuality, the text moves from a poem read in a book to a motto displayed on a ramp. This move changes the tone of the words used in the poem and, as I will show, also changes the process, distribution, and consumption change its representation.

While discourse representation, particularly under the heading of the "Bring Me Men..." ramp's production, provides a way to understand the grammatically implied action of BMMR, it may also be expanded to analyze the authority within the text. Again, we return to the question, who is the "me?", and how the position of "me" changed after

the words were removed and circulated only in ironic re-representations and memory. Like the choice of “Bring Me Men...” for the ramp, Fairclough suggests that “the choice of representing verb, or ‘speech act’ verb is always significant” and that “it often marks the illocutionary force of the represented discourse (the nature of the action performed in the uttering of a particular form of words), which is a matter of imposing an interpretation upon the represented discourse” (120). In other words, the verb “bring” carries the text’s illocutionary force, that is the purpose behind the utterance and the ideology that accompany it.

Discourse representation is the first of five elements Fairclough uses for his discourse analysis, the other four being presupposition, negation, metadiscourse, and irony (118). Presuppositions “are propositions which are taken by the producer of the text as already established or ‘given’ ... and there are various formal cues in the surface organization of the text to show this” (120). Analyzing the BMMR’s presuppositions which I do in the “Men Not Women” section of the next chapter reveals how the difference in production, distribution, and consumption change the text’s presuppositions. Identifying a text’s presuppositions helps identify its underlying beliefs and values, and also the subject position that this belief system constructs, making presuppositions one of the most useful tools in discourse analysis.

Equally useful are “negative sentences” which Fairclough explains, “carry special types of presupposition which also work intertextually, incorporating other texts only in order to contest or reject them” (122). While “Bring Me Men...” does not immediately appear to contain a negation, the negation that it does contain is the primary source of contention that eventually led to the *Agenda for Change*’s removal of the words. I will



look at how the presence of “men,” and its implied negation and most important presupposition “not women,” function within the text’s constitutive role. Negation, in light of the three text processes for the BMMR, becomes a powerful tool for discourse analysis.

The next element of manifest intertextuality that Fairclough explains is metadiscourse: “a peculiar form of manifest intertextuality where the text producer distinguishes different levels within her own text, and distances herself from some level of the text, treating the distanced level as if it were another, external, text” (122). Metadiscourse also implies that the speaker “is situated above or outside her own discourse, and is in a position to control and manipulate it” (122). The implied control and ability to manipulate become key facets of metadiscourse. In looking at the ironic reappropriations of “Bring Me Men...” before and after its removal, I will look at how a distance level was created to allow for the metadiscourse. I will look at how the metadiscourse affects the subject position the text constructs, and the effects on individual identity because metadiscourse is unavailable to some.

Metadiscourse exposes the power within the discourse of “Bring Me Men...” that is particularly context dependent in a similar way that irony, Fairclough’s final element of manifest intertextuality, exposes the way that the individuals whose subject position is constructed through the ramp reappropriate meaning. The intertextual nature of irony is “the fact that an ironic utterance ‘echoes’ someone else’s utterance” and irony “depends upon interpreters being able to recognize that the meaning of the echoed text is not the text producer’s meaning” (123). I will analyze the limited ironic meanings that came before the removal and the ironic meanings or reappropriations that came after the

removal. Being able to recognize the ironic meaning, and indeed creating the ironic meaning, reveals how subjects constructed within the text understand their own subject position and the ways they may negotiate within it.

#### Not-Statements as Presuppositions

Another addition to the intertextual discourse analysis methodology I have been developing is the presence of what Freadman calls “not-statements” (Freadman 49). Freadman explains that “that point of a not-statement is to make a distinction between two terms—kind of texts—which in other respects are described by a like-statement” (51). She applies this to genre by adding that “The ‘like’ part of the generic description establishes the domain of pertinent comparisons; the ‘not’ part establishes a boundary not in the sense of a limitation, or a limit on the possibilities, but the sense of locating ‘this kind’ of text in a space, and *vis-à-vis* other kinds. The not-statement gives this kind of place among other places” (52). The not-statement, then, is essential in defining a particular genre, in this case, the genre of “Bring Me Men...” as a poem, motto, or cartoon, and genre seems to be closely tied to Fairclough and Edbauer’s three text processes and the essential construction of audience: “The question of genre is tied to the question of audience, and thus to the question of expectations and predictions” (52). In the next chapter, I will look at the BMMR’s expectations and predictions, how they changed after 2003, and how this changed altered the audience. Analyzing this is important because the shift in audience led to the *Agenda for Change*, the main exigence for the text’s removal.

## Intertextuality and Subject Position

In his final section discussing intertextuality, Fairclough relates intertextuality explicitly to subject construction. “Intertextuality,” he offers, “and the constantly changing intertextual relations in discourse, are central to an understanding of processes of subject construction” (133). In his discussion of production, Fairclough suggests that text producers “interpellate interpreting subjects ‘capable’ of making relevant assumptions, and of making connections which yield coherent readings” (134).

Fairclough expands on this assertion: “Texts postulate, and implicitly set up interpretative positions for, interpreting subjects who are ‘capable’ of using assumptions from their prior experience to make connections across the intertextually diverse elements of a text, and to generate coherent interpretations” (135). The importance of this expansion is that here Fairclough acknowledges the importance of “prior experience” in interpreting text.

In my analysis of how the removal changed the text’s meaning, I will look at how differing prior experiences from within the Academy and from outside the Academy affected the possible interpretations of the BMMR, how these different experiences, which I suggest affect the interpreter’s familiarity with the ramp, affect the identity created for individuals under the subject position the ramp created, and how prior experiences define the ramp’s audience. Using an intertextual perspective to answer these questions will reveal how connected—that is how familiar with other elements of the ramp’s genre and manifest intertextuality—an interpreter is, and will illuminate why there was such a divide in the ramp’s interpretations.



## Conclusion

Using Edbauer's concept of rhetorical ecology as the overarching concept for my analysis and Fairclough and Freadman's discourse analysis techniques to examine individual encounters and shifts in genre provide the foundation for my discourse analysis methodology. In the chapters to follow, I will answer the questions that Fairclough, Edbauer and Freadman help me raise in the above section and apply the tools of discourse analysis I have discussed to certain texts surrounding the "Bring Me Men..." ramp, including responses from graduates after its removal, the *Agenda for Change*, and other Air Force Academy artifacts that perpetuate the memory and legacy of the BMMR. I will first identify the rhetorical ecology and the text's concatenations, beginning with its origins as a poem, its early days on the ramp, its permanence during the introduction of women, and finally its removal following the *Agenda for Change* in 2003. I will then look at individual encounters with the text, from cadets at the Academy when "Bring Me Men..." was on the ramp, to the poem's appearance in the Fourth Class knowledge book *Contrails*, to ironic reappropriations following its removal. Together, analyzing the text as both a rhetorical ecology and as specific individual encounters will reveal the constitutive power of words and the ways in which these words live on in the memory and tradition of the Air Force Academy.

## CHAPTER 3

### A POEM, A MOTTO, A BELTLESS SPECTACLE

*Bring me men to match my forests,  
Strong to fight the storm and blast,  
Branching toward the skyey future,  
Rooted in the fertile past.  
Bring me men to match my valleys,  
Tolerant of sun and snow,  
Men within whose fruitful purpose  
Time's consummate blooms shall grow.  
Men to tame the tigerish instincts  
Of the lair and cave and den  
Cleanse the dragon slime of Nature  
Bring me men!<sup>10</sup>*

#### Introduction

In order to use my discourse analysis methodology to uncover the subject position, collective and individual identity the ramp produced before, during and after the sexual assault scandal that brought it down, I will move forward in a semi-chronological way. I will look first at the poem and its representation on the ramp before 2003, leading into a discussion of the ways in which “Bring Me Men...” shifted genres, and meanings, over time. Then I will look at the *Agenda for Change*, the primary exigence for the removal, followed by the reactions cadets expressed in the online cadet cartoon the eDodo in the months immediately after the words were taken down and how the text's processes affected its meaning. I will then turn my attention to the Class of 2007's interaction with “Bring Me Men...” beginning with *Contrails*, the book of Fourth Class knowledge, and then look at internal discussions about what should replace it and its

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Walter Foss, “The Coming American.” *Contrails*. (USAF: USAF Academy, CO, 2003) 55, second stanza.

reappearance on the ramp as part of a Fourth Class spirit mission.<sup>11</sup> Throughout, I will analyze graduate and cadet responses made in an online forum from November 2003 to November 2005 and that express individual experiences with the removal, the *Agenda for Change*, and subsequent replacement of “Bring Me Men...” with the Air Force Core Values. Finally, I will look at the various ways “Bring Me Men...” has been reappropriated by members of the Academy community and in this way has survived as a tradition and memory.

In 1964 “Bring Me Men...” was installed on the entry way to the Cadet Area as a way to inspire the Cadet Wing and reinvigorate its values. What began seven decades earlier as Samuel Walter Foss’s poem about the exploring spirit needed in Manifest Destiny America transformed into something different once it was installed on the ramp; it became the Academy’s epideictic motto. Once installed on the ramp, “Bring Me Men...” enabled a narrow subject position for cadets. Literally, those who enter through the ramp, those brought forth, are men and in this instance, “men” is read biologically, but this reading also carries with it the masculine ideology encoded in Foss’s poem and the Air Force Academy culture. Before 1976, this position was unproblematic as the Academy remained an all male institution and military culture remained almost entirely synonymous with male culture. But in 1976, when the Academy saw its first women walk through the ramp, the rhetorically constructed subject position of its cadets did little to ease the transition to a coed Academy. In her book *Bring Me Men and Women: Mandated*

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<sup>11</sup> “Spirit missions” are pranks that Fourth Classmen perform (usually without the knowledge or permission of the authorities) anonymously as a class. They are a sort of rite of passage that later, as part of the *Agenda for Change* directives, were co-opted by the Academy leadership and began to require permission. The reinstallation of “Bring Me Men...” contributed to the policy that required Fourth Class spirit missions to be pre-approved.

*Change at the US Air Force Academy*, which focuses on the introduction of women to the Academy, Judy Stiehm found that while the Academy's leadership recognized that the "Bring Me Men..." sign was linguistically problematic in its message, "the criteria underpinning the *status quo* were an interesting amalgam of extra-lingual concerns: (1) changes must not be detrimental to academy tradition, (2) changes must be standardized, (3) changes must be minimal, (4) changes must not be grammatically awkward, (5) change must be cost effective, and (6) changes should promote positive attitudes toward women cadets" (Stiehm 179). Hence, the biggest change in Academy history—the introduction of women to the Cadet Wing—produced no change in the words on the ramp and the subject position that the Academy very visibly constructed.

#### The Me and the Men: Cold War America

In light of the Academy's resistance to change the text following the introduction of women, analyzing the constitutive aspects of discourse and Fairclough's three text processes explain why "Bring Me Men..." as a poem-turned-motto presented such an obvious linguistic problem, but at the time remained unchanged. The analysis begins with two of the most basic questions: who is me and who are the men? In the case of "Bring Me Men...", the "me" appears to be turn of twentieth century America, whose mountains, plains, prairies, and seas still needed men to tame and conquer. But as the poem became the Academy's guarding motto, the "me" as America took on a slightly different meaning. Instead of pioneers, America in 1964 needed men to safeguard the country in the midst of the Vietnam and Cold Wars. In both cases, the "me" remained America and men remained a gendered term.

Like Foss who envisioned the American frontier as needing men to build a triumphant empire, the Academy as a public institution funded by American tax dollars envisioned a different frontier of American national security as needing men to safeguard the empire Foss's men built. The parallel between Foss's words and the words' meaning during their installation exposes the values underpinning the need for America to call for men. In both, men meant men, and men were charged with empire building and protecting. The very ideals of America, the self-reliant frontiersman spirit (and culture of misogyny) of Foss's day, remained the spirit that the Academy in calling for men wanted to protect. Less than ten years after the fledgling Academy began, and still early in the dawn of manned flight, the classes of men entering through the ramp were pioneers in their own right, the embodiment of coming Americans.

#### Genre Morphing: Poem to Motto and More

The early days of the ramp reveal the unproblematic constitutive character of the text. However, with the introduction of women and the changes in the world from the end of the Vietnam War to September 11<sup>th</sup>, the words "me" and "men" remained the same, and for many, so did the interpretation of them. The longer the text remained on the ramp, the more the positions of "me" as a unified American and "men" as specifically biologic gender that is inseparable from male culture and the ideology of masculinity solidified and the more the text lost connection with Foss's poem. By 2003, in the minds of many, the words no longer concatenated with the poem; "Bring Me Men..." was no longer a borrowed line from a poem but a motto put forth by the Air Force Academy.



This loss of concatenation and partial detachment from the larger rhetorical ecology were the most important changes “Bring Me Men...” underwent prior to 2003, and the reason that the text was ultimately removed. The Academy could no longer have a gender exclusive term greet classes of new cadets, particularly after allegations of an Academy culture hostile to women. But in the days immediately surrounding the removal, those who regarded “Bring Me Men...” as an important piece of Academy tradition looked to revive its origin and provide a different interpretation in its defense. A 1983 graduate in an online discussion forum for graduates and cadets writes, “The Academy used to have the “Bring Me Men” on the ramp... a wonderful poem by Sam Walter Foss. For me, that sentiment is what is needed at the Academy because it is directly applicable to the future officers of the Air Force, whether they be male or female. Bring me your best” (MacDonald). This graduate’s interpretation of the text reconnects it with its origin, but interprets “men” not as a monolithic gendered term, but as the Academy had done in 1976 as a generic signifier for people (Stiehm 179).

Following the removal, “Bring Me Men...” underwent another change in its rhetorical ecology and this time much faster. While the change from poem to motto had occurred over decades and as a result of the words’ isolation on the ramp, the next shift from motto to memory occurred literally overnight as the words came down. No longer present on the ramp as a constitutive text, “Bring Me Men...” remained prominent in the memory and tradition of cadets and graduates who draw on it to establish their collective identity as members of the Long Blue Line. This move from clearly displayed motto to collective memory enabled a number of different textual revivals and manifestations of both the motto and the poem ranging from an exact rearticulation of the words, to shirts

worn by First Class women on an annual pub crawl, to the picture collage in the Cadet Field House to the Academy published Fourth Class knowledge book *Contrails*. Some of these texts, such as the picture collage and *Contrails*, are markers of the text's progression and place in Academy tradition.

*Contrails*, in particular, is an index for Academy tradition and history that changes slightly each year to include quotes, Academy history, Air Force history, and general Air Force knowledge intended to embody the ideals and values each cadet should graduate exuding. Each week the Fourth Class is required to learn a number of things from *Contrails* and are tested on their knowledge at the end of the week. With the *Agenda for Change*, the Class of 2007's *Contrails* were distinctly different from years past. Missing on page 16 was the "purpose of the Fourth Class system,"<sup>12</sup> the doctrinal reason for the training system that was revised through the *Agenda for Change*, and a cultural change manifested best by the removal of "Bring Me Men..." and blamed on the Academy's women. On the first few pages, pictures of the new Academy leadership were taped over those who were fired between the time *Contrails* went to press and the time they were distributed in August 2003. However, on page 55 between the list of class exemplars and the "Altimeter Check,"<sup>13</sup> Foss's "The Coming American" escaped the cultural revisions that taped over past generals. Already left with trying to forge a place

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<sup>12</sup> "The purpose of the Fourth Class System to lay the foundation early in the cadet's career for the development of those qualities of character and discipline that will be required of an officer. These qualities must be so deeply instilled in the individual's personality that no stress or strain will erase them" (*Contrails*, 2006 ed.) This statement was the framework and justification for the rigorous training Fourth Classmen undergo, and it had to be memorized by each member of the Fourth Class. It was replaced in the Class of 2007's edition of *Contrails* by definitions of hazing, harassment, and assault and the absence of the words were linked to the changes in training that mostly eliminated hazing.

<sup>13</sup> Beginning with 2000, each class elects an exemplar at the end of their Fourth Class year who best embodies the spirit of their class. The Altimeter Check is one of the pieces of Academy heritage and is a bit of knowledge that virtually every graduate remembers and can recite. It goes, "Sir, my altitude is 7,258 feet above sea level—far, far above that of West Point or Annapolis."

of respect among the other three classes that had different experiences, the Class of 2007, whose collective identity within the Academy community was exemplified by the empty ramp through which we entered, was caught between relics of the pre-*Agenda for Change* system (Foss's poem) and the new Academy (new generals, new rules for training). The mixture of old and new, empty but still present, meant that the Class of 2007 could neither assume the subject that previous classes had, nor wholly surrender it.

As we see a genre shift from poem to motto to other reappropriations of the text such as cartoons and t-shirts, however partial or fractured each may be, we can use Freadman's characteristics of genre as a way to better understand how each genre was and is responsible for forming cadet and graduates' collective and individual identities. Implied in her characteristics of genre is the notion of an intact, appropriate uptake. Changes in the appropriateness of the uptake mirror shifts in genre, but the text's uptake is an interesting one given that as a physical sign on a ramp, it acts as one constant utterance. Therefore, the uptake, or response to this utterance, depends largely on when the uptake occurred. As a poem, the uptake was to recognize the words as a source of inspiration and match their pioneering spirit. As a motto, the response was about collective inspiration. As a memory, the uptake was a revival of the words and a demonstration of allegiance to traditions of the Academy. Each of these different uptakes depends on the differences in meaning caused by different ways members of the text's audience perceive its place and function.

With this understanding of uptake, we can apply Freadman's characteristics of genre, in particular the fourth and final one, "One of the things a text will do is to play its partner, whether or not that partner is present. In order to do so, it must *represent* its



partner—previous, current, future, fictional or ideal” (Freadman 48). The text’s partner pairs, in each case poem-inspiration, motto-behavioral response, remembered motto-motto remembered, changed as the genre changed and is equally important in understanding the formative effects of “Bring Me Men...” The inspiration for the poem diminished in importance as the genre changed from poem to motto, and slowly became only the words. Then with the removal, the motto being remembered, or as it had become, the words remembered, became isolated. Thus, in representing “its partner—previous, current, future, fictional or ideal,” “Bring Me Men...” as a memory cyclically reproduces itself.

#### Bringing Women: Text Processes 1964-2003

What the cyclical reproduction of the text in the memory of cadets and graduates highlights, especially in contrast with the text as a motto or poem, is the importance of audience and audience expectations in interpreting the words. As the values underlying the need for American men to come, the poem’s place on the ramp created a vast difference between Foss uttering the words and the utterance of metal letters, a difference best understood by looking at the text’s processes of production, distribution, and consumption. The text poem’s producer was originally Foss, but when the poem became the Academy’s guarding motto, the producer became the Academy as an institution. It was no longer Foss calling for men to triumph over the frontiers of land and society, but rather the Air Force Academy calling forth men to lead the Air Force. With the introduction of women, the fact that the Academy, the text’s producer, still physically summoned men meant that while not detrimental to tradition, standardized, minimal and

cost effective, the institution necessarily excluded women from the subject position the Academy constructed. Alys Eve Weinbaum's analysis of racial reproductions in Kate Chopin's "Desiree's Baby," which looks at the ways that ties between race, a culturally reified characteristic, and the constructed American nation, provides an interesting insight into the ties between femininity, a cultural silenced by "Bring Me Men...", and membership in the USAFA cadet and graduate community. One of Weinbaum's central claims is that the logic of "Desiree's Baby" "binds race and reproduction so tightly to each other that the figuration of the racialized maternal body comes to index the mechanisms and meaning of the color line that characterizes and simultaneously contours the nation in which the body resides" (18). By extrapolating this to "Bring Me Men...", the words and their prominent placement on the ramp bind masculinity and tradition so tightly to each other that the figure of masculine tradition represented by "Bring Me Men..." came to index the mechanisms and meaning of the *gender* line that characterizes the culture in which the *tradition* resides.

Perhaps more interesting than the process of text production are the processes of distribution and consumption because before 2003, the distinction between these processes was blurred. "Bring Me Men..." was a text whose distribution was dependent not on the circulation of it as a text, but on the circulation of its consumers. This fixed distribution kept the circulation—even after 1976 when the introduction of women brought the Academy into the public spotlight—restricted to a small community of Academy cadets, graduates, and the faculty and staff able to consume the text because of their proximity to it. Thus, while the subject position constructed by the text did not change, limited access of the text consumers meant that the individual identities

developing within the subject position were restricted to a very small, specific group of people. Cadets and graduates who lived with the ramp (and its memory) for four years circulated around it so much that it transformed from text on a wall to part of their inherited identity as Air Force Academy cadets and graduates. That its circulation relied on the movement of people also meant necessarily that roughly 84% of the cadets receiving “Bring Me Men...” were men, a percentage even higher for the graduate community.

The Academy as the producer of text necessarily anticipated the audience of the text’s consumers when they installed “Bring Me Men...” on the ramp. The Academy’s resistance to change and its interpretation of the words using “common English usage” to understand “men in the generic senses” shows that while external groups pressured it to justify keeping the words with the introduction of women, they still anticipated the audience of the ramp as the select group of people who interact with it daily (Stiehm 179). The addressees, those directly addressed, that the Academy anticipated were the male cadets entering and exiting the ramp on their journey towards becoming an officer and a gentleman. When the words were initially installed, the phrase was appropriate. However, when women passed through the ramp, the text’s addressees did not change; they were still the male cadets entering the ramp and the women who entered alongside them were rhetorically and culturally excluded foreigners.

Another part of the audience that the Academy may have anticipated is the hearers, those not directly addressed, but assumed to be part of the audience. This group was constituted by the supporting members of the Academy community who would also consume the text. Faculty, staff, and military commanders, at the time the text was

installed nearly all men, would pass by the ramp aware that they were not the men being summoned, but responsible for molding these coming men into Air Force officers. With the introduction of women, the hearers expanded to include women who were necessarily added to the cadets' supporting cast, but the addition of this group of women hearers was rather inconsequential.

The final group that the Academy might have anticipated but that changed drastically with the introduction of women in 1976 and then later in the wake of the sexual assault scandal in 2003 is the overhearers, or those not part of the official audience but consumers of the text nonetheless. In the years from its installation to the introduction of women, this group was not very large or significant. Because of the text's process of distribution and consumption, it was difficult for people not intended as the audience to interact with the text. However, as the introduction of women in 1976 brought significant media attention, the group of overhearers expanded, perhaps in a way the Academy as an institution never anticipated, to include media members and members of women's rights groups who paid close attention to the Academy in the early years of its women cadets and to the fact that the entry ramp hailing in new coed classes rhetorically excluded the newest members of the Wing.

#### *The Agenda For Change* and Removal

"Bring Me Men..." survived the biggest change in Academy history as, despite a vocal group of overhearers who acknowledged the alienation of subject position that the ramp created for the new women cadets, the words remained for nearly another three decades. However, the words would not survive the sexual assault scandal of 2003, the

new group of media and public overhearers, and the *Agenda for Change* that ultimately brought them down. In March 2003, following allegations of sexual assault and institutionally silenced rape cases, then Secretary of the Air Force, James G. Roche, and then Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General John P. Jumper, issued the *Agenda for Change*. This document mandated many changes to cadet life and the organization of the Air Force Academy in an effort to make the Academy more closely mirror the active duty Air Force, as well as correct cultural problems that were determined to contribute to the climate that allowed the alleged sexual assaults to occur. With these cultural changes, accompanied by the dismissal of four top-level Academy officials, the *Agenda for Change* officially mandated that the "'Bring Me Men...' sign on the Terrazzo wall ... be removed immediately, and ... be replaced by a statement that more suitably represents the aspirations of the entire cadet wing and the core values of the Air Force" (*Agenda for Change*). Such a replacement occurred in September of 2004, where after more than a year of emptiness, the ramp was refitted with "Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence In All We Do."<sup>14</sup> These words, as Disler recognizes, do what "Bring Me Men..." could not; they "demand devotion enough, without ranking maleness above femaleness" (Disler).

But the removal of "Bring Me Men..." and subsequent replacement with the Core Values more than anything came to be read by many members of the traditionally and overwhelmingly masculine Cadet Wing and graduate community as the representation of the injury women brought upon the Academy, albeit nearly thirty years after their arrival.

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<sup>14</sup> These words, the Air Force Core Values, adopted in 1994 and originally developed at the Air Force Academy, were selected from 42 finalist entries submitted to then Superintendent General John Rosa and installed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, 2004. (Zubeck).



In the years immediately before “Bring Me Men...” came down, femininity as a culture outside of USAFA’s masculine tradition became a problematic characteristic within USAFA’s textually constructed male subject on many fronts. From the particularly unflattering, pleated polyester cadet uniform pants to the bad mullet haircuts women cadets were given during basic training,<sup>15</sup> embracing a feminine identity meant overcoming many physical aspects of the Academy designed to erase individuality, which in the case of women meant choosing to either abandon their feminine identity<sup>16</sup> to try and be part of the male subject or surrender citizenship in the Academy’s culture. The double bind facing the women who were brought where men were summoned and their need to assert their identity as members of the Academy community contributed to the reaction and emotions surrounding the removal. The dichotomized responses to the removal of “Bring Me Men...” between the Academy as an institution and the Academy as a community of cadets and graduates expose most clearly the masculine subject and alienation of women constructed by the text and the changes in the addressees, hearers, and overhearers that constituted its audience in 2003.

While the addressees and hearers had not changed significantly, except that the addressees had now included women for almost thirty years, the overhearers constituted largely by the national media again address the rhetorically alienated position of women who had now become victims of the masculine Academy culture. “Bring Me Men...” had

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<sup>15</sup> On the first day of Basic Cadet Training (BCT) all the women had their hair cut to a standard length of less than three inches in bulk. This requirement resulted in the characteristic mullet that all Fourth Class (freshman) women wore. The rule requiring this ended in 2004 with the class of 2008, whose women were allowed to keep their hair if they could successfully French braid it in less than three minutes.

<sup>16</sup> I do not mean to equate femininity and the feminine identity with being biologically female. There exists a separation of the two (namely, women can be masculine and participate in the masculine tradition). However, the separation between biology and culture and ideology is not similarly present for most men at the Air Force Academy.

by 2003 come to embody the problems that beset the Academy cadet and graduate community, as both individual members and the body that constitute the institution, that depends on invisible gender divisions for organizing and defining its population. These problems, now linked with the removal and all the changes associated with it, physically removed the declared masculine identity at the Academy, but failed to create a space for femininity (and better fitting pants). Thus, the removal eliminated the Academy's textually constructed male subject—and longstanding tradition—that bound graduates and cadets together in a way that effectively blamed its women for the text's loss, alienating them even further.

The news media surrounding the Academy in 2003 could clearly see the space for this alienation, but were unable to see Foss's words as Foss's; they saw the text producer as the Academy and the missing connection to the poem aggravated the relationship between the Academy that necessarily had to respond to public pressure and cadets and graduates unwilling to sacrifice a piece of tradition. This divide between the Academy's desire to atone for its wrongs and the cadet and graduate community intent on keeping a piece of heritage further alienated the women within the latter group who now had to place their allegiance with the masculine culture and deny their feminine identity, or with the contemporary climate that the Academy should reflect and deny their membership in Academy tradition. Both men and women cadets and graduates had by 2003 come to regard the producer of "Bring Me Men..." not as Foss, but as the Academy itself—the traditions, history, and heritage of which each is a part. Hence, the text's subsequent removal was a removal of tradition, history and heritage, an injury that only exacerbated the gender identities within the Cadet Wing and graduate community as it

read the elimination of “Bring Me Men...” as literally anti-male. Similarly, the Academy as an institution saw “Bring Me Men...” not as Foss’s words on the ramp as it had once done, but as the over-masculinized cultural climate of the Academy uttering these words, a culture needing a contemporary update that came in the form of their removal.

### Divided Allegiance and Fractured Identities

At the time of the removal, “Men,” in its ecology of meaning had multiply signified men, the generic reference to people, and as it was removed, anti-men. Each of these different meanings of men came as a consequence not of the word, but of the situation surrounding the interpretation of the word. Freadman’s assertion that “Meaning is not content; it is place and function” reveals the difference and conflict between meaning as fixed or absolute and meaning as place and function (men, anti-men, and the generic signifier of people) that caused the vastly different responses to the removal of “Bring Me Men...” from the ramp (Freadman 59). The Academy as an institution and the producer of the text viewed “Bring Me Men...” in Freadman’s terms; its place was on the entry ramp to the Academy, and its function was the gate-keeping phrase on the entrance that necessarily constructed a masculine subject and environment. Conversely, many cadets and graduates who lived on the other side of the ramp viewed “Bring Me Men...” as a piece of tradition still rooted in an all-male Academy and embedded in this tradition is a necessarily masculine subject. Because cadets and graduates had a coed Academy for more than two decades, the masculine subject construction was an accepted fact, almost an understood contract that women cadets entered by accepting their appointment. The place and function of “Bring Me Men...” had not changed in the view of the cadet and

graduate community because the value placed on tradition overshadowed the possibility of misogyny posed by a masculine subject construction.

The Academy as an institution, however, detached from the emotional connection to the Academy's tradition and heritage, was able to read "Bring Me Men..." exclusively in terms of place and function. In 2003, more than three decades after the function of the words was to reinforce the noble pioneering ideals of America, the Academy's reading of them adjusted as the Academy itself became a new place. With the allegations that the Academy's leadership permitted a culture that silenced victims of sexual assault, the allegations that led to the dismissal of four of the Academy's top officials, "Bring Me Men..." and the Academy as a whole came under a much more public gaze than it had ever experienced. In this context, "Bring Me Men..." could not possibly be separated from its place—guarding the entrance of the Academy—and its contemporary function—constructing a necessarily masculine identity that was potentially hostile towards its women.

It was the text's function in 2003, as it had been since it was installed, that was most problematic. The words had lost their potential to reinforce the ideals of the Academy because in the wake of the sexual assault scandal and so many years detached from their original installation, they lost a connection with Foss's poem. So while cadets and graduates, familiar with the text's tradition, viewed its removal as a betrayal of that tradition, the institution saw the removal as an opportunity to establish new traditions and a new culture more in line with the contemporary values of the coed Air Force Academy. However, cadets and graduates still remained reluctant to let go of the tradition of the all-male Academy that disappeared before many of the cadets at USAFA in 2003 were even



born. A 1977 graduate, whose last year at the Academy saw the introduction of women, commented on the removal: "When USAFA started it was male only. When the poem was written it was mostly a man's world. To coin a phrase, it is what it is, and in this case, it was what it was. I am not a proponent of revising history for political correctness" (Erwin). This graduate's bitterness at the institution for "revising history for political correctness" reflects his interpretation of the text's meaning as absolute, independent of its place and its function for the audience he envisions. For him, what it was has to be what it is; a man's world then, a man's world now. However, for the Academy, the text's removal was not as much about "revising history" (denying it was a man's world) as it was about recognizing that the interpretation was no longer appropriate (it *is* no longer a man's world) given its current place on the ramp and its perceived public function as an epideictic motto.

#### Exigence and Ecology

While differences in the consumers of "Bring Me Men..." had a substantial influence in removing the words that survived the first critique of their constructed subject in 1976, the change in the text's distribution and consumption in 2003 was the reason that it finally came down. To understand how the distribution and consumption changed, it is useful to think about the modification Edbauer makes to Fairclough's three text processes, going from production, distribution and consumption to distribution, concatenation, and encounter. While the distribution of "Bring Me Men..." relied less on circulation of it as a text and more on the circulation of people interacting with it, the media attention the sexual assault scandal brought to the Academy meant the sudden



inclusion of people outside the text's usual distribution. For this newly included piece of the text's audience, the American public outside of and removed from the Academy, "Bring Me Men..." circulated as a result of the sexual assault scandal in 2003 coming to signify a masculine culture that was not only oppressive of its women, but, with the sexual assaults as evidence, had become dangerous and hostile.

The "Bring Me Men..." ramp's distribution, concatenation, and encounter expose the fundamental reason that so much was made of its removal and the reason that its removal came to be a traumatic, even violent, event for cadets and graduates that exacerbated relations between the men and women of these communities rather than relieve them. Before the sexual assault scandal of 2003, "Bring Me Men..." was a piece of internal rhetoric, a text functioning to construct and reify the identity of cadets and graduates embedded in its tradition and cultural significance, which meant for (and was accepted by) the women an assumption of a masculine self and a necessary silencing (at least partial) of their femininity. After the sexual assault scandal, "Bring Me Men..." became a monument that the public could identify as a marker of the culture that in this way silenced and ostracized its women. The Academy as an institution was left to deal with political pressure to correct the hostile climate "Bring Me Men..." came to represent, ultimately responding by removing the words in hopes of doing so.

However, the Academy's response to outside pressure and removal of the words, and along with them an important piece of history, tradition, and identity, became a betrayal of cadets and graduates that further alienated women within these communities. A 1961 graduate annotated the *Agenda for Change* with his opinions on each point, noting about the ramp, "The removal of the 'Bring Me Men...' sign was not a solution to

the current problems at the USAFA. It was an overreaction in an attempt to appease women's groups" (Jones). A 1972 graduate commented on the removal saying "the removal of the "Bring Me Men" sign can only be characterized as pandering" (Kronemeyer). Graduates and cadets injured by the institution choosing to appease political pressure rather than defend the tradition and history of the Academy saw the removal as "an attempt to appease women's groups" and "pandering" because of their understanding of the BMMR's rhetorical ecology was vastly different from that of what the Academy as an institution could allow. It is precisely this difference in the understandings of the BMMR's rhetorical ecology that made the removal a necessary political statement for the Academy, but one that further injured the Academy's women, now blamed for the destruction of tradition and, by extension, the Academy, who now faced a deeper divide between allegiance to their USAFA identity and their feminine identity.

#### Men Not Women

Applying Fairclough's five elements of discourse analysis to "Bring Me Men..." in the time immediately surrounding the sexual assault scandal helps further uncover the divide between how the institution and its individual members understood the text and how the cadet and graduate community's understanding affected their identity. The first of these elements are presuppositions. "Bring Me Men..." presupposes first and foremost that there are men who may be brought. That is, there are available men who fit the demand of the uttering "me." While the "me" represented America in both Foss's poem and an America very similar to Foss's at the time of the installation, "me" as America in

2003 had changed dramatically. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and the technologically changing nature of combat meant that the “me” conflated the Academy, and the Air Force, with a less unified America. What “Bring Me Men...” also presupposes is that men are the desired object capable of the task for which they are brought. This implies that the “me”—America, or as the text evolved over time, the Academy—wants men.

What the desire for men leads to is the second of Fairclough’s elements: negative sentences. While “Bring Me Men...” does not appear to have a negative element, the gendered nature of “men” necessarily means men, not women. This implied negation means that the subject constructed by the text, and because of its place on the ramp, the desired subject constructed of the Academy is men, not women, hence the text’s constitutive role means that the women who are outside of this subject must assume a masculine identity in order to gain membership, literally entrance in the Cadet Wing.

Fairclough’s third element of discourse analysis is metadiscourse and an important aspect of metadiscourse is one’s level of distance from the text. While some discussion of the text occurred when women were admitted in 1976, there was not a significant amount of metadiscourse surrounding it. However, with the sudden influx of outside criticism in 2003, the metadiscourse surrounding “Bring Me Men...” drastically increased. This increase enabled the Academy to read “Bring Me Men...” as the gendered, epideictic motto it had become and encouraged its removal. The Academy as an institution, spurred on by the very detached national media, was able to separate itself much further than the cadet and graduate community, resulting in a much more critical metadiscourse surrounding the text. However, cadets and graduates whose collective

identity draws strongly from the common, shared tradition of which “Bring Me Men...” became a part, were not afforded the same level of distance as the institution, limiting the metadiscourse available to them.

Irony, the final element of Fairclough’s discourse analysis, became a much more volatile device after the text had been removed. While individuals found ironic meanings for “Bring Me Men...” there were not many collective, publically expressed manifestations of it before its removal in 2003. However, the removal spawned a number of ironic reappropriations of the text. In 2005 and 2007, “Bring Me Men...” was the slogan adorning the t-shirts made for the annual pub crawl made by the senior women on the night after the spring semester’s final lesson. This reappropriation of “Bring Me Men...” draws on the gendered meaning of men. The one hundred or so women wearing silver and gold glittered t-shirts displayed their desire for men, though with a very different connotation. Here, the “me” is women, a reappropriation that gives them agency. This reappropriation was enabled by both the collective memory of the ramp which in 2005 and 2007 now held the Air Force Core Values, and the underlying need to continually reassert a feminine identity and an affirmation of belonging and control over Academy culture that for so long was rhetorically denied to them.

#### A Year of Emptiness, Missing Identity, and the Rise of Irony

The Pub Crawl shirts are just one ironic manifestation inspired by the removal of the text and the collective identity it fortified. For nearly a year following the removal of the text, the ramp was empty. But just as “Bring Me Men...” changed meaning because of its place and function, the lack of the text similarly created meaning because of its



place and function. The absence of the text meant that for the first time in roughly four decades the Academy did not have a greeting motto and did not have a textual representation of the ideals each cadet would internalize between the time he (and in few numbers she) entered and exited it. In the year of emptiness following the removal, cadets at the Academy struggled to cope with a vastly different cultural climate brought with the changes that were physically marked by faded shadows on the wall. Fourth Class Cadets from the Class of 2007, the first class to come in under the *Agenda for Change*, found connecting with the three upper classes extremely difficult because parts of cadet textually reified identity were suddenly unavailable to the Fourth Class. For a spirit mission in the fall of 2003, Fourth Classmen constructed a gold "Bring Me Men..." sign and put it back on the wall over night. The reemergence of "Bring Me Men..." from the class that knew it only in tradition and memory demonstrates that that specific part of cadets' collective identity and connection with Academy tradition was desirable, but could only be expressed through an exact rearticulation of its textual constructions; there seemed to be no other appropriate way for cadets to access the textually constructed identity than to assert their own control over it.

In addition to rearticulating "Bring Me Men..." in gold letters,<sup>17</sup> which happened once more (subsequent attempts to replace it were deterred by the threat of not receiving privileges such as being allowed to wear civilian clothing on weekends, wearing backpacks over the shoulders, and talking outside), the Class of 2007 joined the classes of 2004, 2005, and 2006 in internal discussions of what should replace the void on the ramp.

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<sup>17</sup> There are four class colors at the Air Force Academy (gold, blue, silver, and red) that repeat every four years. Class colors serve to unite individual classes and legacy classes of the same color, as well as distinguish cadets within the classes.



As a particular instance of the text's "viral intensities" within its ecology, emails circulated within the Cadet Wing offering cynical suggestions for the new slogan, resenting the apparent de-masculinization represented with the *Agenda for Change* and loss of the constructed identity the Academy underwent as a consequence of the sexual assault scandal. Slogans, suggested by both men and women, such as "Get in the kitchen and bring me a sandwich, bitch" were offered as an attempt to reassert the former identity of the Academy (Higginbotham). But unlike the reappearance of "Bring Me Men..." which found expression only through the original text, cadets and graduates expressed their reluctance to surrender their past identity through ironic hyperboles of the original text.

Along with cardboard letters and cynical emails, the cadet online cartoon periodical, the eDodo, was another venue through which cadets could express their resentment over the removal. The May 2003 issue of the eDodo featured a cartoon that said: "The U.S. government, spurred by the recent removal of the sexist 'Bring Me Men' quote from the U.S. Air Force Academy, has decided to update other masogynous [misogynous] symbols of America into more balanced, gender-neutral monuments" (eDodo Vol VI, Issue I). The cartoon features a picture of the Statue of Liberty, bearing the caption: "This model of male domination and subordinated femininity will be renovated this summer using a more androgynously-gendered model. Initial planning looks something like this:" followed by a picture of the Statue with Dennis Rodman's face superimposed on it (eDodo Vol VI, Issue I). In this cartoon, the "me" meaning America is once again evoked, this time representing not only the destruction of the Academy, but also the monument that best symbolizes the United States.

The U.S. Government, spurred by the recent removal of the sexist "Bring Me Men" quote from the U.S. Air Force Academy, has decided to update other misogynous symbols of America into more balanced, gender-neutral monuments.

The latest monument on the chopping block is the venerable Statue of Liberty



This model of male domination and subordinated femininity will be renovated this summer using a more ambiguously-gendered model. Initial planning looks something like this:



As soon as FY04, Congressional Democrats are preparing legislation to change the Jefferson Memorial into the Clinton Memorial; however, they do not believe that funding will be available for the marble Monica that is planned to be kneeling between the legs of the monument.



Figure 4: Statue of Liberty eDodo Cartoon<sup>18</sup>

A later issue featured a mock for sale sign selling "Ten (10) steel letters; silver, approx 5' high; Arial Narrow Font; Specifics: 1 each B, R, I, G, 2 each M, E, N, some weathering, but overall good condition for their age (44 years); Can be used to make cool phrases like RING BEEN MM, M GERM BENNI, ~~BRING ME MEN~~, BEN RIM N MEG; I'll also throw in a pair of quotation marks and some ellipses" (eDodo Vol VI, Issue 2). This cartoon takes the physical absence "Bring Me Men..." and represents the removal not a disappearance, but a denial, words crossed out of the Academy lexicon. Because the sexual assault scandal brought allegations of an environment hostile to women, of the three words, "Men" came to bear the brunt of the blame for the text's removal.

Graduates, like the cadets who saw the removal of the letters as a denial of their established collective identity, struggled to understand their relationship to their damaged

<sup>18</sup> PanDeMoN, "Gender Neutral," May 2003, eDodo Volume VI Issue I, <edodo.org>.

heritage. A 1989 woman graduate in March 2005 reflected on the ramp and on the place of women at the Academy: "I guess in trying to overhaul the attitudes and culture at the Academy, someone felt that anything with the word 'Men' in it had to go. This is a huge step backwards for the progress of integrating women into the Academy. The demise of the 'Bring Me Men...' ramp is almost too big of a price to pay. It makes me feel sad, disappointed, and almost 'dirty'" (Nye). This graduate's feelings about the removal represent an inversion of the situation that caused it. The "dirty" feeling that she articulates is her feeling of sexual violation at the hand of the institution, just as the removal of "Bring Me Men..." was the institution's corrective action to the sexual assaults occurring within it. The text had constructed a male subject the entire time it guarded the entrance to the Cadet Area, and once removed, instead of feelings of inclusion, this woman felt that her individual identity as a woman outside the constructed subject had damaged the collective identity and tradition at the Academy. While the Academy saw the removal and replacement of "Bring Me Men..." as the external manifestation of atonement for the wrongs its culture allowed, this graduate sees it as continuing and reconstituting that same wrong; the removal for her is both a physical violation of her Academy identity and an condemnation of her femininity within the constructed masculine subject.

Later in her reflection on the ramp, she explains her position as a woman in relation to the Academy's textually constructed subject: "The Academy was founded as an all male institution. That is fact. It is part of the tradition and history of the school. To try and erase that is to be untrue to ourselves" (Nye). The constructed subject is indeed inherently male, and as she recognizes, in trying to alter this masculinized tradition by

removing “Bring Me Men...” the Academy has caused cadets and graduates within its tradition and lineage to be “untrue” to themselves and deny part of their identity as individuals and as a collective community.

In only the ninth class of women, this graduate concluded her remarks with “The ‘Bring Me Men...’ ramp reminded me that I was breaking ground, almost breaking the rules. And as such, I should be careful. Careful not to destroy the hallowed nature of the Academy and careful not to let myself get destroyed in the process” (Nye). She balances the Academy’s constructed subject with her own identity place within its masculine tradition. For her, “Bring Me Men...” was still an internal message to cadets whose distribution, encounter and consumption were not intended for nor had expanded to include outsiders. She received the text as a reminder of the responsibility she bore as a cadet, both to the institution and to herself. She, representing all women cadets who felt the removal was a regressive action, felt “dirty” because the process of removal failed to balance the individual and the institution, the internal and external, the need for the traditionally masculine subject with the need for an appropriate space for a feminine identity.

## Conclusion

While the BMMR’s removal and replacement was an institutional effort to change this, it was effectively only a reaffirmation of the masculine subject and legacy reified through the traditions at the Academy. After undergoing changes to genre, meaning, and audience, “Bring Me Men...” remains a memory in cadet and graduate folklore, however fading as each new class enters under “Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence In



All We Do.” However, elsewhere on the Academy are other symbols of gender that remind those there of the male subject the Academy first envisioned and has yet to escape: every building on campus is named after a prominent male air power pioneer—there was no place for women under “Bring Me Men...” even as role models; the Cadet Field House where each semester every cadet must pass the Physical Fitness Test is guarded by a sixty foot phallic Minuteman III missile, meaning that in order to meet standards, women must first penetrate the masculine landscape outside only to be greeted by a picture of two men standing at attention under “Bring Me Men...”; the Women Air Service Pilot (WASP) memorial bench bears the inscription from General of the Air Force Hap Arnold, “you have shown you can fly wingtip to wingtip with your brothers” indicating that equivalent performance from the alienated gender was a surprise rather than an expectation; the “Women in the Air Force” display is a two panel glass case to the right of the entrance to the theatre, positioning women in the Air Force as a theatrical performance; and even the special belts designed for general officers do not fit on women’s pants because the Air Force has not yet designed one for women, indicating yet again the surprise that accompanies women’s success in a man’s military more than thirty years after women first walked through the male subject and began to forge a feminine identity within these parameters.

The Air Force Academy is an institution that actively and publicly strives to create the identity of its members. While removing “Bring Me Men...” appeased the public who came to read it as announcing the male subject of the Academy that created a hostile environment for its women, the removal and resulting perpetuation of the words in memory became further damage to the women who searched for a feminine identity



within the male force they both joined and vehemently defended. While the loss of the text was traumatic for most of the Academy cadet and graduate culture, perhaps nothing better exemplifies the position that women are afforded at the Academy, even under the new motto, than the display of Jacqueline Cochran, arguably one of the most important and influential early air pioneers, and certainly one of the two most accomplished women pilots. Cochran's display, which proudly chronicles and commemorates her storied career in early American aviation, is located under the spiral staircase in the Cadet Library. As ever present intruders of the male subject, from motto to memory at the Air Force Academy, women, excluded from those beacons in by the entrance ramp for nearly four decades and blamed for the loss of tradition that came with the institution's attempt to change it, are permitted only two positions within this culture. One requires a denial of a woman graduate's or cadet's feminine identity for partial (but still some) membership in the Academy. The other requires embracing their alienated feminine identity that will leave them beltless spectacles hidden under the stairs.

## CHAPTER 4

### WORDS MATTER

*Bring me men to match my rivers  
Continent cleavers, flowing free,  
Drawn by the eternal madness  
To be mingled with the sea  
Men of oceanic impulse,  
Men whose moral currents sweep  
Toward the wide-infolding ocean  
Of an undiscovered deep;  
Men who feel the strong pulsation  
Of the Central Sea, and then  
Time their currents to its earth throb  
Bring me men!<sup>19</sup>*

#### Integrity, Service, Excellence: A New Motto

We have seen that even in the absence of “Bring Me Men...” the Air Force Academy has yet to fully include its women members. As each new class walks under “Integrity First; Service Before Self; Excellence In All We Do” of the “Core Values Ramp,” with higher and higher percentages of women, the memory of “Bring Me Men...” slowly fades, a link not as much with the Academy, but as an artifact that dates the graduates who knew it. The Class of 2007 was the last class to feature “The Coming American” in their *Contrails*, the only class to replace Recognition, the much anticipated culmination of the Fourth Class System, with “Operation Phoenix,”<sup>20</sup> and the last class

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<sup>19</sup> Samuel Walter Foss, “The Coming American.” *Contrails*. (USAF: USAF Academy, CO, 2003) 55, third and final stanza.

<sup>20</sup> Operation Phoenix was intended to be the replacement event for Recognition. Recognition was for years the culmination of the Fourth Class year, three days of intense training before spring break after which Fourth Class Cadets were officially garnered into the wing, granted all privileges, and permitted to wear the Prop and Wings insignia that distinguishes upperclassmen. Operation Phoenix, due to hurried planning and resentment from the upper classes lamenting the loss of Recognition, was three days of confusion and poor attitudes right before Thanksgiving break that resulted in the Class of 2007 gaining some privileges, but not all.

linked to the ramp's fiercely contested former slogan. Unlike the single ambiguous pronoun "me," the new motto features two pronouns: "Self" and "We." The first of these is clearly reflexive, gender neutral, and applicable to every member of the Academy and the Air Force. The second, "We," is completely inclusive. There are no distinctions in who is part of the audience, who was intended for that audience and who is excluded; everyone encountering the text can strive for excellence in all he or she does.

Now five years after "Bring Me Men..." came down and four years after the Core Values went up, every cadet at the Air Force Academy has walked under the new motto without ever seeing the old one. The collage in the Field House remains in place, a reminder that even under the neutral tone of the new words on the ramp, "Bring Me Men..." still circulates as part of the Academy tradition. In its effort to move forward and express the ideals of today's Air Force, the Core Values represent collective values. Unlike "Bring Me Men..." that inspired individuals first, asking them to be one of the men desired, the Core Values inspire the community first, and then the individual within it. Integrity is paramount, and as it is taught at the Academy, this means doing the right thing for the greater good even if it is at the expense of the individual doing it. "Service Before Self" demands that service to your unit, be it a Cadet Squadron, the Air Force Academy, or the Air Force, comes before individual desires. And finally, "Excellence In All We Do" ensures that excellence is not an individual virtue, but a value attained by the community. By eliminating the individual and making the motto all inclusive, the Air Force Academy ensured that the "Bring Me Men..." controversy disappeared with the words even while the phrase still circulates.

## Bridging the “Real Air Force” Gap

Aside from eliminating possible controversy in the future and constructing an all-inclusive, collective subject, installing the Core Values on the ramp made another important cultural change. “Bring Me Men...” was a phrase specific to the Air Force Academy. Outside of the people who came to know it in the wake of the sexual assault scandal, the words held meaning to the relatively small USAFA community. The Core Values, on the other hand, are everywhere present in the Air Force, active, reserve and guard. They are words that resonate with every airman in the US Air Force from his or her very first day of Basic Training. Because of its mission and the logistics of training 4000 cadets year-round, the Air Force Academy very often must operate differently from the operational Air Force, or as it is known at USAFA, the “real Air Force.” Part of the *Agenda for Change* directives were to more closely mirror operational Air Force procedures and practices, directives that were used as part of the justification for the changes in training. The Core Values, replacing a very Academy specific phrase, afforded cadets membership in the “real Air Force” and opened the Academy to members of the Air Force who previously would not have understood the text on the ramp. With the Core Values, the Air Force Academy created a new, collective subject representative of the US Air Force more so than the Academy, and in doing so, helped bridge the gap between the Academy and the other 289,000 members of the US Air Force.

## Reflections on Methodology

After analyzing the “Bring Me Men...” ramp and what it meant and what it means, I have reflected on my discourse analysis methodology as a way to understand the

complexities of specific circulating texts. I found that the greatest strength of the methodology was in using the concept of a rhetorical ecology as the broad concept that connected each different representation of my text. Doing this enabled me to see the long term progression of “Bring Me Men...” separate from each individual instantiation of the text. Then, using more specific analysis techniques for each encounter, it became clear how certain aspects of the text changed as the text evolved within its ecology.

One danger in using a discourse analysis methodology that understands a text process in terms of a rhetorical ecology is that there is the risk that the methodology could become pluralistic. That is, the rhetorical ecology model could make it seem that all of a text’s meanings are equal, when, as I have shown, this is not the case, particularly because language has material effects on people. However, analyzing each encounter within the rhetorical ecology model will allow for different significations of the text to emerge as more important than others. The rhetorical ecology model also recognizes that using genre by itself or discourse analysis techniques by themselves as an analysis tool are not enough.

The discourse analysis methodology I used to analyze the “Bring Me Men...” ramp’s rhetorical ecology and various encounters within it has raised a number of areas for future research; primarily, a look at the Core Values’ rhetorical ecology. As a much larger project, it would be interesting to explore how the Air Force Core Values circulate within the Air Force, how they constitute a collective identity, and how they function as a unifying ideological tool within an organization the size of the US Air Force. An analysis of the Core Values also raises questions about who has agency over language, how the



military's hierarchical power structure influences this, and who is responsible for making the decisions on the Air Force's text practices.

#### Catharsis, Tradition and My Academy

When I began this project, I did so with a very personal connection to "Bring Me Men..." I was part of the spirit mission that put it back on the wall, part of the class that began our Academy careers wishing we had it and the "old" Academy back, part of the class that wore the phrase on shirts, and part of the group of women who vehemently defended "Bring Me Men..." and its place on the ramp. As national attention and political pressure lessened slightly following my Fourth Class year in 2003, certain traditions returned to the Academy. Recognition came back in 2006 for the Class of 2009. In an effort to connect with past classes, Cadet Squadrons 37-40, which were eliminated in 1999, came back for the 2006-2007 year, and I graduated as the commander of the Almighty All-Stars of Cadet Squadron 38. But as old traditions crept back in, we knew "Bring Me Men..." was gone from the ramp, and forever. That being said, I found the reappropriations of "Bring Me Men..." the most interesting because they show how people maintain connections with the past through present usages of the same text.

In October 2006, at the Academy Women's Symposium, a conference for women cadets and graduates of the service academies, a panel of congressionally appointed women who were partly responsible for bringing down "Bring Me Men..." spoke to us. Following the panel discussion, I asked about the phrase and expressed the injury I felt toward the tradition and heritage of the Academy. The woman in charge of the committee answered my question and I have no idea what she said to me. What I do remember is

that during a break after the discussion, seven different women Air Force Academy graduates ranging from the classes of 1981 to 2003 approached me to say they were relieved that current women cadets still felt connected with the phrase, that we too were hurt by its removal, and that we were also reluctant to change that Academy tradition. The next day, Brigadier General Select Michelle Johnson, Class of 1981, a varsity basketball player, a Rhodes Scholar, and the first woman to be Cadet Wing Commander, spoke to us over lunch. She told us how on the night before graduation, a classmate of hers told her he did not believe she deserved to graduate with him. We laughed. She went on to discuss her time in the Air Force and how the stresses of the Academy prepared her for it. She mentioned "Bring Me Men..." saying that its removal did not change the Academy; the Academy had already changed. The removal was simply validation of this change and that now under the Core Values, women were closer to belonging there than ever.

We left later that day, and on the plane ride from Washington DC to Colorado Springs I pondered her words. I did not feel like I belonged more now that "Bring Me Men..." was gone. In fact, I felt I belonged less than she did. Partly why graduates are so proud of the Academy is its rigor, the idea that one in four of us who starts will not finish. I finished, but with the feeling that my time at the Academy has not been as hard as it should have been. I did not want to have new words that would make me more welcome. I did not want more operationally realistic training. I wanted an Academy that had not changed because I wanted to prove to her, thirty years after women first entered the Academy, that the women now, that I, was just as bold and tough as she was, that today's women would not let down the women who came before us.

Now, after more than a year of being away from the Academy, and after researching, writing and thinking about “Bring Me Men...”, I understand what Michelle Johnson meant. What I found most remarkable about this project is how it entirely changed the way I look at the ramp. The words on it make a difference in the Academy, in the Air Force, and in the lives of the people who walk under them. “Bring Me Men...” was not a motto whose tradition and legacy as an Academy artifact outweighed its power as a text. I see now that those words, just as Michelle Johnson suggested, meant that I could not belong. Neither did their removal mean I would. This project has shown me that cadets, both men and women, still must live up to and exceed the standards set by graduates who have come before, but with the removal of “Bring Me Men...”, belonging to the Academy and meeting the standards were not impossible for women as it had been before. Part of belonging, though, is connecting with the community past, present, and future. However, I have learned through this project that words are stronger than the connections people make with them.

#### Words Matter

Beyond understanding the controversy surrounding “Bring Me Men...” on the ramp, the changes made during its removal, and how the Core Values unite the Academy with the Air Force, this project has been a look at a specific example of the power of words and the ways in which words matter. From constructing a subject position and collective and individual identities beneath it, “Bring Me Men...” has shown how words represent shared cultural identities in which the institution inevitably participates. In installing words throughout the landscape of the Academy, the Air Force acknowledges

the power of words and their responsibility in forming leaders of character charged with making decisions that will affect the national defense of the United States in the years to come. "Bring Me Men..." has shown that it matters where words are placed, how they circulate, how they are interpreted, and how they come to signify as part of and detached from their ecology of concatenated meanings. "Bring Me Men..." has shown how words can change, fracture and constitute identities of people close to them, and how they can ironically enable agency in places where they previously denied it. But more than anything, "Bring Me Men..." has shown that words, as artifacts of history present, absent, and remembered, matter to those who still hold on to them through tradition, and how these traditions that constitute the words, more so than the letters do, connect the Americans that came with the Americans that come.

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